Southwest Texas State University Grotto

OF THE NATIONAL SPELEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

COVER; Cavers ascending drop in Hell Hole, West Virginia. Photo by Terry Raines.

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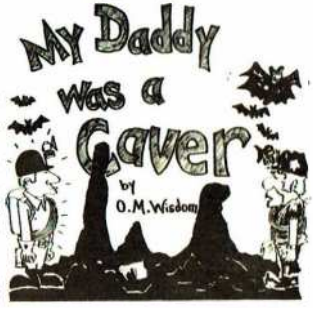

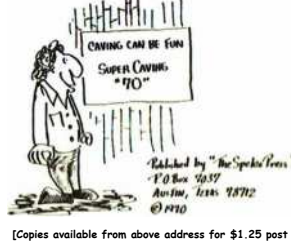

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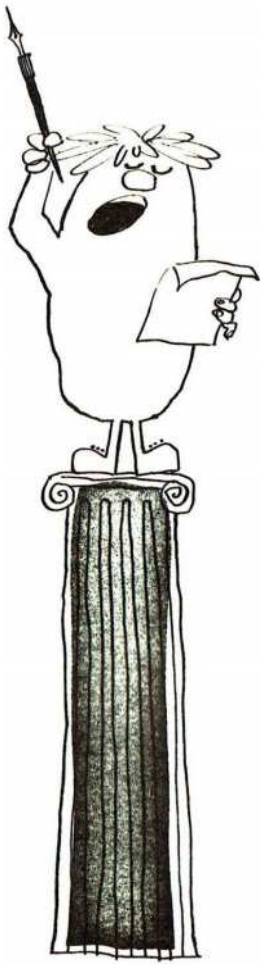
EDITOR'S SPOT



Cavers,

This past year has been one of the best for our club but with new leadership such as Logan's we will go on to much better things. This might be a good place to list our new officers so here they are:

Chairman Logan McNatt
Vice-Chairman Roy Brown
Sec.-Treasurer KiKi Nicholis
Equipment Chairman Blake Harrison
Trip Chairman Dale Pate
Research Chairman Mike Walsh

One word more, as editor, the next SWT Newsletter will be The Caves of Hays County. We hope to be able to do it to TSA standards so we will be able to turn it over to them.

JMW

LA MALA MUJER

by MIKE WALSH

For many Texas cavers a trip to Mexico means three things; ticks, Mala Mujer, and the ever present jungle. These three factors are not present throughout all of Mexico: just enough to present a problem. It is for those who are lucky enough not to be familar with Mala Mujer that this article is written. Mala Mujer is a poisonous, acid type plant which when it comes into contact with the skin produces great pain.

The skin turns red, large blisters form, and severe pain is present. Often the pain lasts for three or more days, leaving a scar in many cases. Even a mild case may cause itching for several weeks. Last January while hiking near Jalpan, Queretaro, I had the misfortune to get into a patch of Mala Mujer. Within three minutes pain and the blisters were present.

I know now why the Mexicans call it Mala Mujer, or evil woman. For some reason I felt that I should wash it off as soon as possible. The only water I had contained a weak solution of carbide, but it was used anyway. Within minutes the pain was gone, and the blisters had disappered. A small spot was the only reminder of the plant. Several days later another caver got into some and we tried it on him. Once again it worked! A possible explaination is that the plant produces an acid, and the carbide is a base, thus neutralizing the effects. If this cure works, now let's find something to defeat the ticks and the jungle!

THE JUMAR FACTORY

by BRIAN PETERSON

This summer while traveling in Switzerland, Keith Huess and myself decided that we would try to locate the factory in which Jumar ascenders are manufactured. After examining our Jumars we finally found a label still intact and managed to pick out the name of a town, Reichenbach, Switzerland. After about two hours of looking over a map we located a tiny dot symbolic of the town. Quickly we jumped in the Volkswagen camper and proceeded to look for it.

Could this small town be the home of a great factory? The name of the town did correspond to the name on the Jumar but there were only about thirty chalets. We stopped at a store and I got out with a Jumar. Speaking no German, I proceeded to wave my arms, roll my eyeballs, and shove the Jumar in the proprietors face. He quickly got the idea and sent me on my way down the road. However, he did provide us with a map.

Obviously he was somewhat less than proficient in the arts of geography because by using his map we got completely confused. We decided that we would ask the help of other locals. After talking to several housewives; many of whom thought we were trying

to sell them the Jumar, we arrived at still another chalet. I knocked at the door and a man came out. When 1 showed him the Jumar and asked him if he knew what it was he replied, "Yes, I make them." Quietly picking myself off the ground, I began to explain why we had come. The man, Mr. Julius Marte, was very receptive and asked us inside. He speaks only a few words of English so he called a friend to translate. When the friend arrived we went down to the factory which is in Mr. Marte's basement. Jumar parts were everywhere, wow, fantastic!

Mr. Marte opened a drawer approximately three feet long, two feet wide, and one and one half foot deep. It was completely filled with right hand Jumar jaws. He said that he originally designed these ascenders for use in climbing down to eagles areas to band the small birds. This was back in 1958. Mountain climbers quickly saw the value of these devices and then later cavers started using

them. The recent change in the alloy of the cams was necessary due to the grit and mud encountered in caves.

We rigged a rope in his yard and showed him various methods of prussiking with his devices. He then showed us the method which is enclosed with the Jumars. He saw the value of our methods but harassed us by saying, "I can understand why you don't know how to use them, I have never translated the instructions to English." We all laughed. We also demonstrated various rappell devices and Mr. Marte was quite interested. He requested that we collect and send to him pictures of different climbing methods using his ascenders and any recommendations or improvements that we may have.

EDITOR'S NOTE

Readers:

The article above, written by Brian Peterson, is just one example of Brian's interest in all areas of caving. Last June while Brian was caving in Europe we recieved word that he had been chosen caver of the month. The article on the following page is a reprint of the article that appeared in the Texas Caver.

The TEXAS CAVER, June, 1970

CAVER OF THE MONTH

It is a great pleasure for me to name Brian as Caver of the Month for two reasons: he is one of the best cavers I know, and he is the one who got me interested in caving in the first place.

Brian, or "Bird" as he is affectionately known, comes from Georgetown where he has been caving since about 1964 or earlier (high school days). He and I worked together as guides for many moons at Inner Space where we became badly infected with the caving bug on our many mapping and exploring trips off the trail at night. I couldn't wait to get back to U.T. after that first summer at I. S. (1967) and join the grotto, and Brian, just out of high school, had plans for SWTSU and the club there.

Now look at the SWT caving club! It's an NSS Grotto and has one of the most active memberships in the state. The SWT Grotto has done extensive work in new areas of Mexico and is getting together a fine bunch of maps for the TSS Hays County survey. Brian, along with other go-getters was instrumental to this success.

Brian Peterson in the jungles of Mexico. Photo by Ed Fomby.

Brian, a junior geography major with an interest in karstology, has been chairman of the SWT Grotto besides holding other offices. Between his many survey and exploratory trips to Inner Space and other Texas caves, he has wedged in survey jobs of such huge Mexican caves as Cueva de la Puente (7,000'), Sotano de Matepalma (6,800'), Sotano de Venadito, and Puente de Dios (big and still going). This summer he plans to knock about in Europe and go caving there. Besides all this, he found time to organize the 1970 TSA Convention in San Marcos, which was one of the best in years.

Always cheerful, Brian is completely deserving of his true middle name, Felix, which is a Latin word meaning "happy" or "blessed". I am very happy to count him as a close friend and the TSA is blessed (well. . .almost) to count him as a member !

---- William Elliott

Congratulations and the Caver of the Month Certificate to Brian Peterson from the CAVER staff. Ed.

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CUEVA DEL RANCHO DE AGUAMARGA

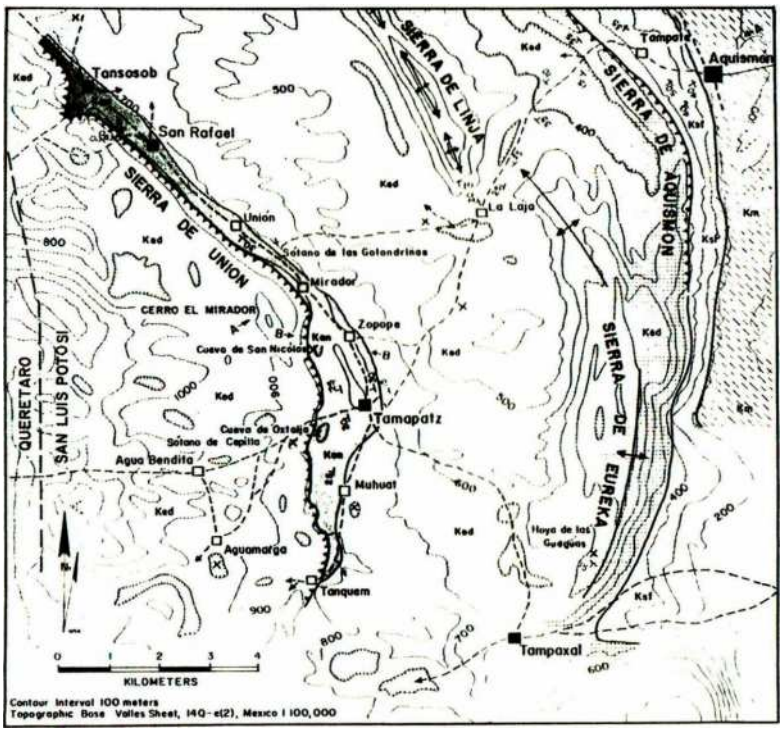
by JOE SUMBERA

Jt was the summer of 1968 that on a lead from John Fish, UTG caver, that Jim M'Intire, Jimmy Jarl, Jim Sheppard, and I headed south for Aquismon, Tamapatz, and Cueva del Rancho de Aguamarga. Starting point was Aquismon, 25 miles south of Valles, and the town where the Sotano de las Golondrinas trips depart. Leaving in the afternoon from Aquismon we started the ten mile hike to Golondrinas. Four hours later we arrived in La Laja, halfway point to Golondrinas, and camped there that night

The summer heat, humidity, and biting bugs had almost done us in. The next morning after surveying our wounds, we headed for Golondrinas. What a sight! The pit partially made up for the sweltering hike. Four hours later we struggled into Tamapatz. The town is located on a ridge between two fabulously beautiful dolines. It is presently accessible only by a 15 mile hike.

We slept in the courthouse that night, and in the morning secured permission from the local Jefe to explore caves in the area. From Tamapatz it is a four mile hike to Rancho de Aguamarga The ranch is even more isolated than Tamapatz and the cueva is located in the large dolina west of the ranch. We hadn't brought along any sleeping gear so all our caving had to be crammed into

one afternoon. McIntire and I headed for the big cave while Sheppard and Jimmy checked several of the numerous pits in the area. From the bottom of the doline the large walk-in entrance to Aguatnarga could be entered. The entrance is not well defined as it is more like a large canyon cutting into the hill side. After scrambling through the jungle and walking down the canyon for 200 feet, a roof could be seen 180 to 200 feet overhead. Finally 500 feet inside the canyon the true cave began



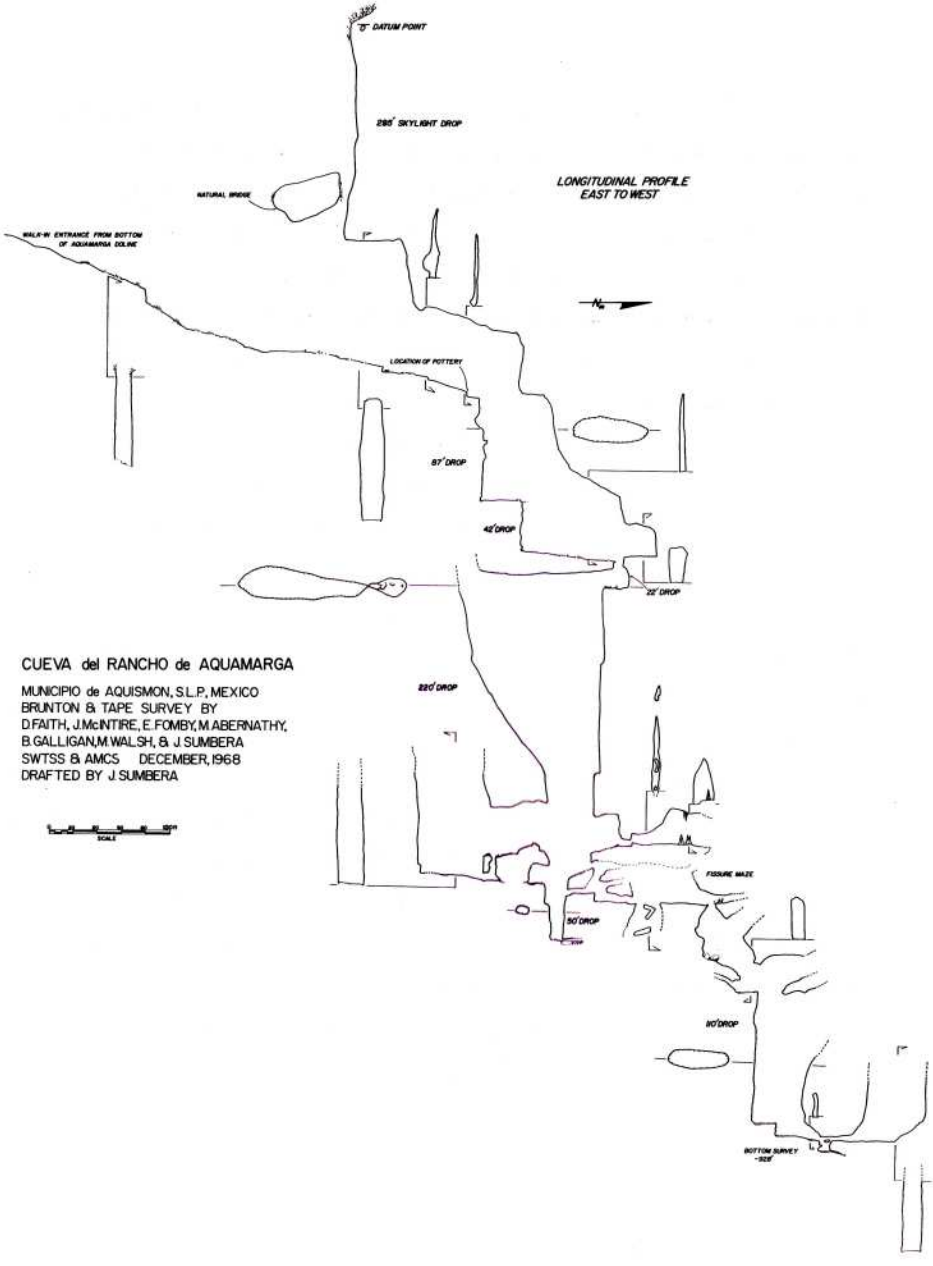
GEOLOGIC MAP OF THE GOLONDRINAS AREA

SAN LUIS POTOSI, MEXICO

Several skylights can be seen over 200 feet above the floor. The cave passage shrunk down to a fissure 5 foot wide by 100 foot high and immediately we encountered a 84 foot drop, then fifty to sixty feet later a 42 foot pit. One hundred feet later there was a 22 foot pit and just at the bottom of this pit, the passage intersected a high canyon passage. By this time Mac and I had run out of rope. We dropped rocks down the pit and their drop time was four seconds!

The pit was approximately 300 feet deep. Realizing we were already about 450 feet deep and no one had checked this cave out. Mac and I got excited. Our enthusiasm was further heightened by running water we could hear in the bottom. Figuring it was starting to get dark, we pulled the rope out and rejoined Jimmy and Jim They had investigated three pits. The deepest being 180 foot deep. After a couple of tortillas, we headed back to Tamapatz and civilization.

After nearly seven months of dreaming of new depth records our team left again for Aguamarga. On the trip were Miles Abernathy, Jim McIntire, Mike Walsh, Jimmy Jarl, Ed Fomby, Duane Faith, Brian Galligan, and myself. Miles, Mike, Mac and I went down several days earlier. This gave us time to check out Cueva de San Nicolas, North of Tamapatz. The cave had been checked out for 2000 feet to a 90 foot pit. The first 2000 feet of the cave was well decorated and was basically walking passage with a few duck unders.


0' DATUM POINT
285' SKYLIGHT DROP
LONGITUDINAL PROFILE
EAST TO WEST
NATURAL BRIDGE
WALK-IN ENTRANCE FROM BOTTOM OF AQUAMARGA DOLINE
LOCATION OF POTTERY
87' DROP
42' DROP
22' DROP
220' DROP
FISSURE MAZE
50' DROP
80' DROP
BOTTOM SURVEY -925'
CUEVA del RANCHO de AQUAMARGA
MUNICIPIO de AQUISMON, S.L.P., MEXICO
BRUNTON & TAPE SURVEY BY
D.FAITH, J.McINTIRE, E.FOMBY, M.ABERNATHY,
B.GALLIGAN, M.WALSH, & J.SUMBERA
SWTSS & AMCS DECEMBER, 1968
DRAFTED BY J.SUMBERA
SCALE

A small stream flows through the entire length. We rigged the 90 foot drop as far out of the water as possible and at the bottom of the drop we encountered a 30 foot drop. This drop had to be rigged so as to pendulum across a 15 foot wide pool to advoid getting wet. A couple of more climb downs and the stream siphoned. The cave needs to be mapped and photographed.

Several volleyball games and one day later the rest of the crew arrived. We had come prepared. A large supply of food and 2500 feet of rope were available. This was one of the biggest caving expeditions up to this time in Mexico. Nine cavers and five burros left Tamapatz for Aguamarga. That afternoon we got together our gear and hiked around the area. On the next day we started mapping down the entrance. The entrance skylights were plumbed at 285 feet. The deep pit was 220 feet deep. At the bottom, we encountered a 50 foot drop to a water crawlway.

Mac and I stripped to the flesh and pushed the water passage to another pit. Meanwhile, we were ripping our flesh on the sharp rocks, the others located a dryer alternate route to the pit. We continued mapping to that point. After about twelve hours in the cave and tired eyeballs from mapping, the team headed out. The following day we started to return, but it was decided to rest for a day. We rested and gorged ourselves on potatoes and canned foods. Mike Walsh was unanimously handed the

coke drinking award. That afternoon Duane and I were led to a walk-in cave not too far from the school house. The cave was very well decorated but we didn't have the lights to explore it beyond the entrance area.

Fully revitalized, we headed back into the depths. Continuing mapping, the pit that we had stopped at turned out to be 110 feet deep. We chimneyed down a five foot drop, crossed a shallow pool, and the water disappeared down a very small crawlway. The cave probably doesn't end but we could go no farther. Finally we pulled out the 800 feet of rope. The total horizontal length of the cave was about one quarter of a mile. The total vertical depth was 929! This area is by no means caved out, however, the long hike makes it less than an ideal caving area.

What do you mean we use new members?

WHY WONDER CAVE ?

by MIKE WALSH

Help you map Wonder Cave, sure I have half an hour. With these words Bill Elliott committed himself to what proved to be four trips and many long hours of work. Wonder Cave, long the butt of cavers jokes, is the oldest Texas commercial cave still in operation. It is basically a 500 foot long, multilevel fissure type cave. With over 1200 feet of mapped passage it is the longest cave In Hays County.

The cave was discovered in 1893 and almost immediately it was used to extract suckers money. Local rumor has it that numerous poker games were carried on within the walls of the cave but Mark Beaver, the owner and discoverer, denied it to the end. It is known, however, that a shed was built over the entrance and a small sum was charged to visit the cave. In 1927, A. J. Rogers of San Marcos bought the cave. With a massive publicity campaign (signs all over the nation) he brought in the people.

The fact that the cave is small, expensive and has virtually no formations on the trail does little to slow the flow of money. The first evening that we mapped proved to be one of the most interesting. Bill Elliott, his wife, Blake Harrison, and myself quickly mapped from the gift shop down to the poker room. At this

point we ducked under a bench in the back of the room and entered the old commercial section.

It is a strange feeling walking down an old commercial trail. One finds himself in an area once known by thousands of people. Now it is seldom visited. In addition to a beautiful flowstone formation (the crystal palace) we observed several very old waterproof lights. The return to the poker room abruptly brings one back to reality, Wonder Cave of the 1970's.

On our second trip to the cave we mapped down the main passage, through the dark room, to the well and up into the fossil room. In addition, to time problems, the metal in the cave threw our brunton off. The rest of the commercial trail was mapped on our third visit to the cave. While the others mapped I entered a hole near the elevator shaft.

STALAGMITE

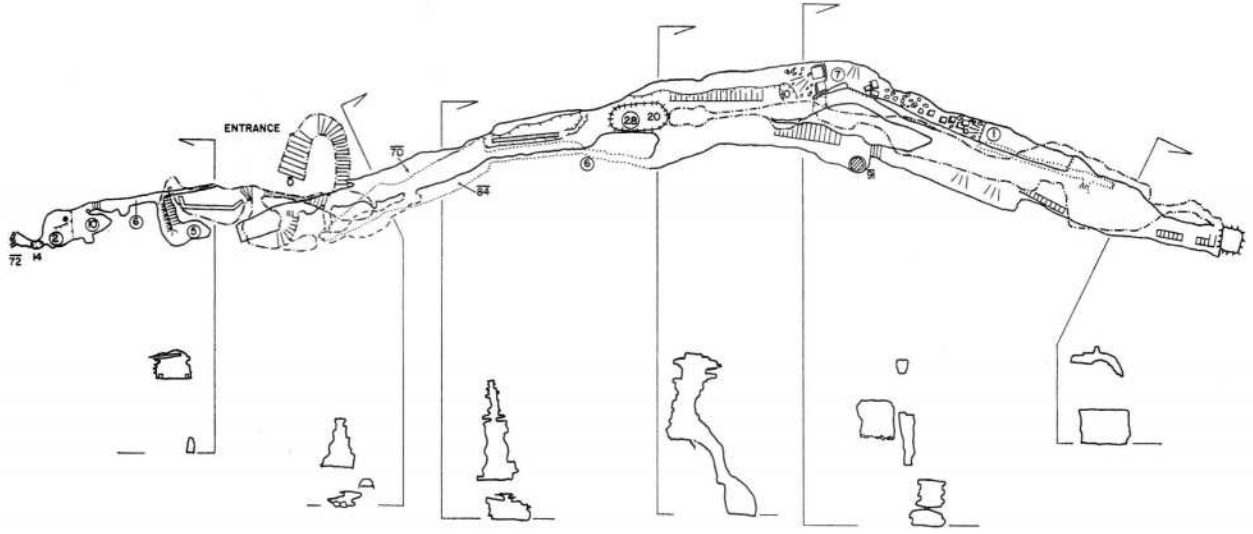
After crawling a few feet I was amazed to find an area full of formations! While they were nothing spectacular, they were formations. When the final figures were in we found the cave to be over 1200 feet long and only 93 feet deep, not 151 as is claimed. We found it to be a good cave but we are in agreement that the managements misrepresentation to the public is wrong. In short, Wonder Cave is a victim of over commercialization.

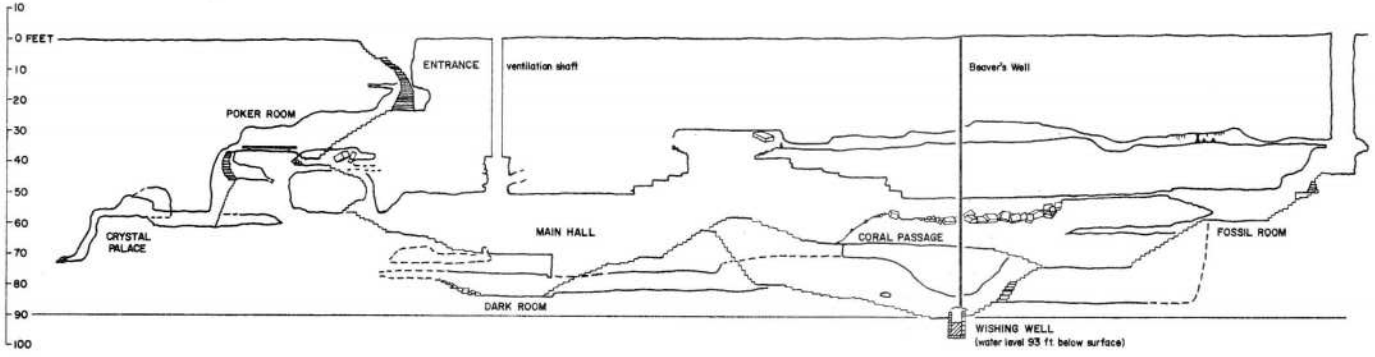
WONDER CAVE (BEAVER CAVE)

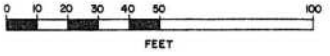
HAYS COUNTY, TEXAS

BRUNTON AND TAPE SURVEY, JULY, AUGUST 1970 BY
W. ELLIOTT, V. ELLIOTT, B. HARRISON,
R. McMILLAN, AND M. WALSH
DRAFTED BY WILLIAM ELLIOTT

© 1970 BY WILLIAM ELLIOTT







Hell Hole

Dear Friends,

A group of us from Texas assembled and left for the 1970 NSS Convention in the "Transportes Espeleológicos" bus. A VW bus was towed along as a spare. Leaving Austin on the 13th of August we drove directly to Watoga State Park, West Virginia and enjoyed four days of caving in the area. Although the caves were colder than those we were accustomed to, exploration was enthusiastic; everyone frantically running, squeezing, sliding, and all. You see, with such a great selection of really far out caves and such a short time, there's no other way. I'm certainly going back to the Alleghenies.

Clark

But then, just as our involvement was the greatest we were forced to relocate. Those of you who remember the Huntsville-Birmingham split know. State College, Pa. put out as many or more bad vibrations as the steel mills. Bobby Vagy does the best job of describing the situation in the December 1970 NSS News. Read it and support the ideas.

By the 22nd of August the Convention was over and we began the return. Amidst our mechanical difficulties Jim and Julie put us up on their Illinois farm. What a welcome break. Austin was welcomed too when we made it.

Watoga Campsite

Our Group: Don Broussard, Frank Ghigo, Blake Harrison, Clark Lillie, Susan McSwain, Neal Morris, Pam Morrison, Carl Pickston, Terry Raines, Ric Speed, Charlie Yates, Pete Strickland

Terry Raines

Ric Susan

Cass Cave →

Pete

Blake

Ric

1970 NSS Convention

Charlie

THE EXPLORATION OF MATEPALMA

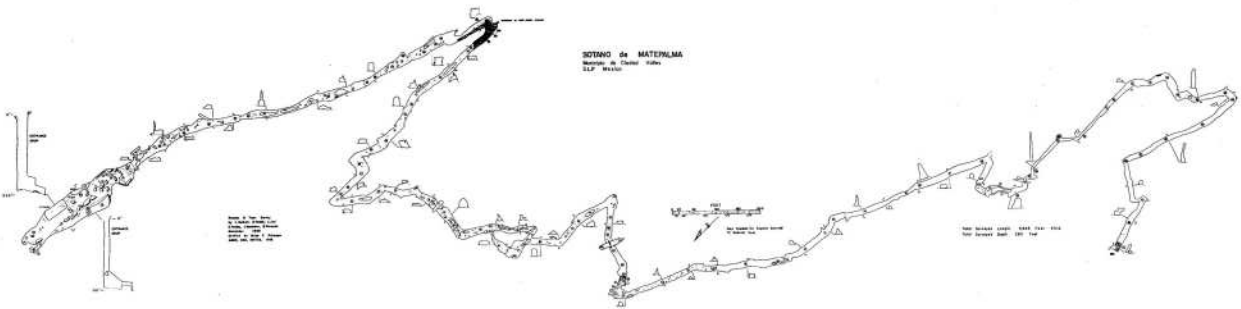
by BRIAN PETERSON

This sotano was located by air by Bill Russell in the fall of 1968. It is located approximately three kilometers west of the Inner-American highway about twenty kilometers north of Cuidad Valles, Mexico. The cave was first reached during the 1969 Easter holiday break by Joe Sumbera, Jimmy Jarl, Logan McNatt, and Gail Webster. They rigged the entrance drop and found a large cave passage leading off. In many places water was found and here also were fish.

The cave was entered in the summer of 1969 by Bill Elliott and crew for the purpose of collecting the fish. During Thanksgiving of 1969, Joe Sumbera, Mike Walsh, Jimmy Jarl, Ed Fomby, Logan McNatt, and Brian Peterson entered the cave to survey it. After much difficulty in locating the cave we arrived. The entrance drop, 180 feet, was rigged and the group entered. The area around the entrance is quite voluminous and filled with massive breakdown.

The group divided into surveying teams. The first team proceeded down the passage approximately 3000 feet and was to survey to the back of the cave. The second team was to survey the entrance area to the starting point of the first team. The first team surveyed approximately 3000 feet of passage in about six hours. Then with very heavy eyeballs they returned after having reached the end of the cave. The second team had some trouble surveying the entrance area due to a broken tape. They ended up taking sights no longer than 37 feet. The map is now drafted and several copies are in circulation.

Total surveyed length is over 7000 feet and the depth is over 300 feet. Within the system there are several leads. About 1000 feet from the entrance the passage splits. The passage to the left was too wet to survey but it could really go. Also, much water enters the system from above and many small feeders come into it. All of these could and should be checked. It is through these that water enters the system as the entrance takes little if any water. This Sotano is in the immediate area of Sotano de Yerbaniz and Sotano de Japones. Much more work will have to be done to see if there is a correlation between the three systems.


SOTANO de MATEPALMA
Municipio de Chalcol Valles
SLP Mexico

Hays County's

Cave Registration

the 1970 convention of the Texas Speleological Association was held in San Marcos at Southwest Texas University. As host Grotto we were asked to take care of the details and arrange for the various local caves to be available for caving on that weekend. At the first of the year a group of our members went caving in Alabama where they encountered cave registers almost everywhere they went.

The registers were installed to keep a record of who visited the cave and why. Members of our Grotto felt that it might be to our advantage to install them in the following caves before the convention; Ezell's Cave, McCarty Cave, and Boyett's Cave. The following is a list of the visitors to these caves since April, 1970.

Boyett's Cave Register

Name	Af f i1lat ion	NSS#	Date
Charles Yates	SWTG	-	4-11-70
Joe Sumbera	SWTG	6368	4-11-70
Viola Boyer	Rio Grande S.S.	11109	4-12-70
Robert Keeper	RSS	-	4-12-70
Paul Boyer	RSS	8422	4-12-70
Hubert Morton	RSS	-	4-12-70
William East	RSS	-	4-12-70
John East	RSS	-	4-12-70
Dan Watson	Balcones Grotto	11563	4-12-70
Albert Stephens	RSS	-	4-12-70
Frank Erhard	SWTG	-	4-12-70
Wanda Purifoy	SWTG	-	4-12-70

Name	Affiliation	NSS#	Date
Jerry Johnson	U. of Texas Grotto		4-12-70
Mike Walsh	SWTG	11077	4-12-70
David Decker	A&M (indep.)	-	4-12-70
Stephen Brodowski	Rice Grotto	10191	4-25-70
Paul Boyer	Rice	8422	4-25-70
Stephen Kriust	UTG	11656	4-25-70
Jerry Johnson	UTG	-	4-25-70
Bobby Camp	San Marcos High	-	5-03-70
Steve Fonville	Sherman High	-	5-03-70
Dennis Crawford	SWTG	-	6-21-70
Mark Taylor	SWTG	-	6-21-70
Gene Strait	SWTG	-	6-21-70
Blake Harrison	SWTG	12101	6-24-70
David Walsh	Abilene, Texas	-	6-24-70
Mike Walsh	SWTG	11077	6-24-70
Billy Campbell	Rice	-	7-19-70
Bill Sherborne	Rice	-	7-19-70
Jon Everage	Rice	-	8-02-70
Sandy Everage	Rice	-	8-02-70
Mike Connolly	Rice	-	8-02-70
Bob McCormick	National Geographic	-	8-23-70
Tommy Cox	National Geographic	-	8-23-70
Tom Stallman	SWT Student	-	9-22-70
Donald Wallace	SWT	-	9-22-70
Randy Whitley	SWT	-	9-22-70
David Hardt	SWTG	-	10-10-70
Dick Montgomey	SWTG	-	10-10-70
Sandy Luker	SWTG	-	10-10-70
John Teates	SWTG	-	10-10-70
Patti Beutnegel	Kyle, Texas	-	10-10-70
Craig Busse	Kyle Elementary	-	10-10-70
Fay Busse	Kyle, Texas	-	10-10-70
Dan Watson	Balcones Grotto	11563	10-10-70
John Karl	Baleones	-	10-10-70
Sandy Everage	Rice	-	10-10-70
John Earson	Rice	-	10-10-70
Joanne Ta 11im	Rice	-	10-10-70
Dick Montagomery	SWTG	-	11-05-70
Sandy Luker	SWTG	-	11-05-70
John Teates	SWTG	-	11-05-70

McCarty's Cave Register

Name	Affiliation	Date
Joe Sumbera	SWTG	4-10-70
Gail Webster	SWTG	4-10-70
Frank Cummings	Pan American	4-12-70
Belinda Lopez	PASS	4-12-70
Wayne Snowden	PASS	4-12-70
Rael Rodriguez	PASS	4-12-70
Tony Allota	PASS	4-12-70
Jon Clayton	PASS	4-12-70
Jennifer Clayton	PASS	4-12-70
Margaret Swancey	PASS	4-12-70
Mike Booth	PASS	4-12-70
Coral Morton	PASS	4-12-70
David Johnson	PASS	4-12-70
Ken Schiller	PASS	4-12-70
David Core	PASS	4-12-70
Randy McNatt	SWTG	4-12-70
Logan McNatt	SWTG	4-12-70
Kandy Hill	SWTG	4-12-70
Charles Yates	SWTG	4-14-70
Roy Brown	SWTG	4-14-70
Mike Walsh	SWTG	6-25-70
David Walsh	Abilene, Texas	6 -25-70
Brian Peterson	SWTG	9-13-70
Mike Walsh	SWTG	9-13-70
Judy Williams	SWTG	9-13-70
Diana Porter	SWTG	9-13-70
Charlotte Hammond	SWTG	9-13-70
Jerry Bryant	SWTG	9-13-70
Grayson Knapp	SWTG	9-13-70
David Hardt	SWTG	9-13-70
Bobby Cole	SWTG	9-13-70
Bud Allen	SWTG	9-13-70
Richard Montgomery	SWTG	9-13-70
Dale Pate	SWTG	9-13-70
Jerry Moore	SWTG	9-13-70
Bill Moore	SWTG	9-13-70
Sandy Luker	SWTG	9-13-70
Steve Shepherd	SWTG	9-13-70
Ross McAlpine	SWTG	9-13-70
Blake Harrison	SWTG	9-13-70
Kathy Williams	SWTG	9-13-70
Phyllis McAda	SWTG	9-13-70
Ron Rowe	SWTG	9-13-70

Name		Affiliation	Date
Jerry	Moore	SWTG	10-30-70
Sandy	Luker	SWTG	10-30-70
Dale	Pate	SWTG	10-30-70

Ezell's Cave Register

Name	Affiliation	Purpose		Date
Joe Simo	SWTG	Ins tall	Register	4-28-70
Joe Sumbera	SWTG	Ins tall	Register	4-28-70
Dee Fogarty	SWT	Ins tall	Register	4-28-70
Mike Walsh	SWTG	Install	Regis ter	4-28-70
Brian Peterson	SWTG	Biology	Observation	9-26-70
Bill Russell	Balcones	Biology	Observation	9-26-70
Suzanne Wiley	T. Tech	Biology	Observation	9-26-70
Bill Elliott	T. Tech	Biology	Observation	9-26-70
James Reddell	UTG	Biology	Observation	9-26-70
Steve Helm	SWT	None		9-29-70
Eddy Durham	A&M	None		9-29-70
Brian Peterson	SWTG	Remove	Trash	11-14-70
Paul Chappell	SWTG	Remove	Trash	11-14-70
Roy Brown	SWTG	Remove	Trash	11-14-70
Logan McNatt	SWTG	Remove	Trash	11-14-70

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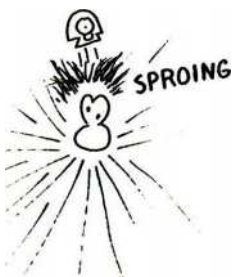


GOLD, SILVER, AND SPANISH SADDLES

by MIKE WALSH

If you stay with caving long enough you will find that you have collected dozens of stories related to caves and great hidden treasures. Even Hays County is rich in folklore and tales of interest. For years old timers have told of the cave under Old Main, on the Southwest Texas State University campus. They go on to say that it runs across town to Wonder Cave. After looking into the facts we found a basis for this rumor.

It seems that the same type of rare cave salamander found in Ezell's Cave, located near Wonder Cave, was also found in an artisian well at the base of Old Main. The second point is that there probably is a cave under Old Main! While cavers are unable to reach the cave today, we do have this story coming from a teacher at San Marcos High. Several years ago, there was a small storage room under the building. Mr. Wyatt, the teacher, and a friend entered the cave through this room. The cave was only a small one but it was a cave! Later when an office was needed they bricked shut the door thus closing the cave forever.

Stories of gold and silver laden saddles abound throughout Texas. In the Hays County version, a rancher in north Hays County found a small cave about thirty years ago. He lowered his son by rope. The boy reported a Spanish saddle that would make

any goat roper's eyes come out of his head. Most likely, that is where the story originated, out of his head.

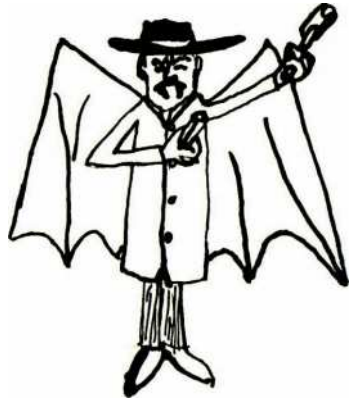
Returning to more factual material we have Big Mouth Cave. The owner tells this story about the cave. It seems that back in the late 1800's his grandfather's ranch was a major stagecoach stop between Austin and San Antonio. Often the cave was a topic of conversation during the overnight stop. One day a group of men came up from Mexico with an old Spanish map. The inscription on the map read in part, "There is a cave called Big Mouth." In addition, it went on to say that the Spanish had buried several bars of silver.

The owner was doubtful but let them dig nevertheless. After several days of digging they gave up and went home. Several more groups came and were allowed to dig. The owner, tired of the trouble, then stopped letting people in. While it is purely speculation on my part, it is possible that some American in Mexico found himself in need of money. Remembering the cave at the stop, he took to map making!

Perhaps the most famous cave in Hays County is Ezell's, named after its discoverer, Greenberry Ezell. The story goes that Ezell and an Indian friend found the cave one day when they moved a rock. Ezell's Cave may well have been the first commercial cave in Texas. Old Greenberry put a small boat in the cave and charged a small sum

for a cave tour and boat ride. The real story of treasure in this case applies, not to Ezell's Cave, but to Ezell himself.

When the gold rush began in California, in the days of forty-nine, Greenberry packed up and headed out. Too smart to work, our hero sold supplies. When he returned to San Marcos he was a rich man. Always one to distrust banks, rumor has it that he hid his gold in a small cave somewhere between the San Marcos River and the Baptist Academy. While on his deathbed he attempted to tell his sons where it was, but he was unsuccessful. Is it just a myth or is it the truth? Perhaps some caver will be in that area, move a rock, find a cave, go in, and find - a new cave for Hays County!



Maybe they will qualify you next time!

TRIPS

Texas

The Southwest Texas State Grotto has been very active since our last newsletter but unfortunately there has been a lack of trip reports turned in. Following the TSA convention hosted by our Grotto our caving activities did drop off. School ended and we took off in fifty different directions. Brian Peterson went to Europe and plans to write an article later. At any rate, here are the reports.

DATE: March 1970
DESTINATION: H.T. Miers Cave
PERSONAL: Logan McNatt, Judy Williams, Kandy Hill, Freda Webster, Scottie Jackson, Pete Strickland, and Blake Harrison.

The usual trip to the cave and the evenings' activities preceeded the cave entry the next morning. The girls did their bit in their rigging the ropes. After eight hours and one mud fight all emerged safely. After a fast rapell off the Pecos bridge (250'), the Langtry Gypsum caves were visited.

DATE: July 1970
DESTINATION: The Caves of the Sam Vest Ranch
PERSONAL: Joe O'Donnell, Jimmy Plenming, and Jim Decker.

These caves, which are located on the Sam Vest Ranch, are formed in gypsum. The owner, who gave us a map of the cave

proved to be very friendly. As Jim went over the rise near the cave he was startled to learn that he was standing in a group of coyotes. The caver and the coyotes ran! Upon entering the cave they found a large number of bats. Due to the great number of bats it was necessary to crawl thru the room. Total length of the cave is a little over 3500'. In addition to this cave, there are several others of the same length.

DATE: August 1970
DESTINATION: Cascade Pit
PERSONAL: Vernelle and Bill Elliott, and Joe Simo

We rapelled down the fifty foot pit and found a hugh pool of ice water waiting for us. Our brave crawl thru the siphon produced no salamanders. It is interesting to note that on our tour of the commercial cave there, we found several salamanders!

DATE: Two weeks after Labor Day
DESTINATION: Gorman Falls Cave
PERSONAL: About 40 members of the Grotto

Needless to say this was the first club trip of the year. With cars spread from San Marcos to Bend we finally started into the cave on Saturday morning. Several thousand back we ran into bad air and were forced to withdraw. The traditional club swim in followed the muddy cave.

DATE: September 27 1970
DESTINATION: Midnight Cave.
PERSONAL: Sandi Luker, John Teates, Dick Montgomery, David Hardt

Mike Walsh, James Overcash, Dave Burdick, Grayson Knapp, Cliff Gulley, and fifty cavers from across the state.

Traveling in two cars, we arrived at the cave about one in the afternoon. The owner wanted to go into the cave so we were not alone in the cave. All the way thru the cave we ran into groups of people from all over the state. As usual, we were impressed by Midnight Cave. The hike back to the car was done with wind to our backs and rain in our face. Overall, it was a wet but a happy trip.

DATE: November 1970
DESTINATION: H.T. Miers Cave.
PERSONAL: Several members of the SWT Grotto

A fast trip out to the cave to re-map it proved to be a good one. No trip report, and an article to come out later keeps this report short.

DATE: Every other day
DESTINATION: Hays County
PERSON: Walsh

As usual he was seen running all over Hays County he calling out "cave, cave, cave". As usual, he got no answer.

DATE: November 15, 1970
DESTINATION: Emerald Sink, Langtry Lead, and Mile Canyon
PERSONAL: Walsh, Morris, Luker, Pate, Moore, Nicholls, Allen Rocamontos, Walker, Harrison, and , Knapp.

After a few mix ups, we fina lly arrived at Mile canyon. One flat later we all got to the cave area. While one group went into Langtry Lead, the other went into Emerald Sink. The next day we switched off. We also enjoyed meeting the newly formed Red River

Caving group. Down the Pecos bridge, once again went Blake and his group. The long trip home proved worth it when we went to Marco's for a pizza.

DATE: December 23, 1970
DESTINATION: River Styx
PERSONAL: Mike Walsh, David Walsh, Jim Decker, and Joe O'Donnell.

Why another trip to River Styx Cave? Who the hell knows. However, once again I found myself floating thru the -75 degree water and muttering "nevermore". Anyone for Styx?

DATE: Inbetween beers
DESTINATION: Where else? INNER SPACE
PERSON: The GREAT WHITE BIRD

All we can say is that we heard some caver talking to himself, "It goes, it goes".

Now that we have your attention once again, on with the trip reports. Other Texas caves visited include: Fisher's Pit, Boyett's, Ezell's, Cave of the Lakes, Indian Creek, Blowhole, Pumpkin, Deep, McCarty, MFP, and many others. Unfortunately, we have a lack of trip reports. Let's keep up the good work.

MEXICO

Whenever possible, our group takes off for the land of the big ones. This record will briefly outline the activities of the SWTG while there.

DATE: June 1970
DESTINATION: Chalcatongo, Zequiula
PERSONAL: Joe Simo, Pete Strickland , Tim Jones, and Joe Sumbera

A long trip to the area south of Mexico City proved to be a dead end as no caves were found in the area. We then went to Zequila, south of Orizaba, and visited four pits. The deepest was only 257′ deep. Sotano de la Cascada was explored for about 400′ until we were stopped by a crawlway. The lure of the area took over and the entire group ended up in Acapulco.

DATE: August 1970
DESTINATION: Rio Verde, San Luis Potosi
PERSONAL: Blake Harrison, David Rice, and Bud Allen

Acting upon a cave lead from Mike Walsh, the group drove into the area looking for la cueva de Iglesia Vieja. After checking several small caves the group finally rented horses to go to the cave It was one large room with a 200 foot skylight entrance .

Due to the large amount of water that it was taking we were unable to explore it.

DATE: Labor Day weekend [September 7, 1970]
DESTINATION: La Joya de Salas
PERSONAL: Blake Harrison, Mike Walsh, Don Broussard, and Terry Raines

Attempting to reach La Joya on an extended weekend is next to impossible. After taking several wrong roads, we ended up at the cave. The next day the cave was entered and the hunt for leads was on. Several water passages were checked but nothing could be found. The next day the group returned to do some mapping while Walsh attempted to remove a rock leading to a second entrance. After the rock was removed we found that the second entrance came in on top of Sima Grande. This new section was mapped. Total depth of the cave was over 900'.

Editors note: Recently a water passage was pushed by another group and the cave went down 200' more and they ran out of rope.

DATE: October 11, 1970
DESTINATION: La Gruta de Carrizal
PERSONAL: Thirty members of SWT and a few A & I people.

Taking Terry's bus we found that people are much harder to handle that way. One group got lost on the way to the cave and returned to the states. As most club trips, this one was total confusion. The cave was great with its hot and cold streams.

DATE: Thanksgiving [November 26, 1970]
DESTINATION: Rio Verde, and Rio Jalpan
PERSONAL: Harrison, Jarl, Porter, Shepherd, Knapp, Pate, Montgomery and Walsh.

After reaching the cave we proceeded to map. La Cueva de Iglesia Vieja proved to be one large room slanting downward to

gravel. After the hike down to the cave we went on to Cueva de Rio Jalpan to check the water flow. As we found ourselves in water over our heads and going upstream, there were those who wanted to turn back. Grayson Knapp lost his hardhat in one of the pools. While hiking out of the area we ran into the San Antonio Grotto.

DATE: Thanksgiving 1970 [November 26, 1970]
DESTINATION: Rio Jalpan
PERSONAL: Peterson, Brown, Simo, Ramsel, and a friend from the English department.

Brian Peterson went to the Cueva de Rio Jalpan to check the difference between the amount of water that went in the cave at the top entrance and what came out the bottom three kilometers away. He found that there was only 40 gallons more. This cave when the map is complete will be one of the largest in central Mexico. The average passage is about 200′ wide and over 100* high. The Grotto plans to map it on Spring Break.

DATE: Christmas Break 1970
DESTINATION: Mexico and Guatemala
PERSONAL: Blake Harrison, Joe Sumbera, Jimmy Jarl, and Sam Billings

Driving day and night they made it to Guatemala, Due to lack of time they were unable to do any caving but they had a good time anyway.

DATE: January 1971
DESTINATION: The Inner-American Highway
PERSONAL: Logan McNatt, Charles Yates, Roy Brown, & Miles Abernathy

This time Logan wanted to do some real caving so he and his group just started going to every major cave listed between Laredo

and Jalpan. They did!

DATE: January 1971
DESTINATION: Jalpan Area
PERSONAL: Mike Walsh and Calvin Walker

The original trip planned was for five people but one of the members took his bus on another trip. With this obstruction in the way those who wanted to go had to do so by Mexican bus. After a few days in Mexico City, we arrived in our target area. Hiking around it produced several pits over two hundred feet and one of five hundred feet. This drop is free! Other larger pits are nearby but time prevented visiting them. A trip is planned for March.

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DATE: August 1970
DESTINATION: NSS Convention
PERSONAL: Charles Yates, Blake Harrison

While at the NSS Convention two of our members had the chance to go to Simmons-Mingo Cave and Hellhole. It goes without saying that they did not pass up the chance. They were found cold but a great deal of fun.